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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the promotion of literacy and the development of library services in the multinational, multilingual republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics since the October Revolution as a model for state or regionally centralized services that promote local arrangements while serving a single national purpose in multiethnic and multilingual developing nations. Consistent application of the principle of service to the needs of readers is credited with success in raising the literacy rate and the development of libraries within these republics. Objectives subordinated to this guiding principle include the development of guidelines of library service in the political and cultural education of the masses, identification of the content and forms of service with due account of the regional specifics of the republics, establishment of an integrated network of public research and special libraries, training and education of library personnel, balanced collection development, development of a regional bibliography, and the promotion of library administration. (RAA)

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MAIN TRENDS AND PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIANSHIP IN A MULTINATIONAL STATE

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MAIN TRENDS AND PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIANSHIP IN A MULTINATIONAL STATE

IFLA's major thesis to the effect that "society must provide an opportunity to all people to benefit from reading"[1] is realized in different countries in different ways.

More than sixty years long experience gained by Soviet libraries in conditions of the socialist state is extremely instructive, since it abounds in creative quests for effective methods of moulding a harmoniously developed personality of a builder of a new life by means of the printed word. As a matter of fact, the entire history of Soviet libraries is linked with consistent implementation of one of the most important principles included in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki, 30 July -1 August 1975): "to contribute to...the spiritual enrichment of the human personality without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion".[2]

Each of the Soviet constituent republics has its history of library construction. The advantages of the socialist system and its broad social and cultural possibilities manifest themselves with particular vividness in the experience of the development of libraries in Soviet Central Asia and

1) The International Year of the Book. (UNESCO Bulletin), 1975, No.5, p.4

2) In the cause of peace, security and cooperation. On the results of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Helsinki on 30 July-1 August 1975, Moscow, 1975, p.63. (In Russian)

Kazakhstan, the republics whose cultural level on the eve of the Great October Revolution had a number of similar features with the countries which are now establishing fundamentals of national library systems.

To make clearer the main trends and problems of the development of librarianship in the USSR it is necessary to touch upon the economic and social and cultural situation in which Soviet libraries came into being and developed.

The Great October Socialist Revolution won in the multinational state including over 100 nations and nationalities a considerable number of which, far from passing through the stage of developed capitalism, had been at the level of patriarchical and feudal forms of economic management. With the country's low average percentage of literacy (24%), in selected regions, particularly in Central Asia, only 2-3 per cent of the population were literate. Almost 50 nationalities had even no alphabet of their own.[3]

Before the revolution the vast country had only 76,000 libraries with a total book stock of 46 million items. The libraries were largely located in the central areas of the country. Most of them were primitive libraries attached to religious schools and children's asylums. There were a mere 3,000 scientific and technical libraries, and 14,000 public libraries. In Central Asia there were no public libraries at all. Prior to the October Revolution all the public libraries of Russia could serve a total of only about 2 million readers, the country's entire population surpassing 150 million.

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3) Communism and culture, Moscow, 1966, p. 97 (In Russian)

In such conditions one of the priority tasks of the socialist revolution was to ensure a sharp growth of culture of the broad masses. Liquidation of illiteracy was to have become a starting point for the fulfilment of this task.

The historic decree of the Soviet government "On the Liquidation of Illiteracy among the People of the RSFSR" signed by V.I.Lenin on 26 December 1919 obliged all the citizens between the age of 8 and 50 who could not read or write to learn reading and writing in their native language or Russian at will. In the early 1920s similar decrees were also adopted in the other republics which had joined the Soviet state.

The possibility of free use of the native language is one of the most important principles and stimuli of the development of national culture. The right to use the native language was granted to the Soviet citizen under the constitutions of 1924 and 1936, and was confirmed by the new Constitution of the USSR adopted in 1977.

The campaign for the liquidation of illiteracy, which was a paramount condition for the reorganisation of the whole life on socialist principles, assumed a truly nation-wide character. Millions of illiterate grown-ups were drawn into newly organised schools where they learned to read and write; preparatory measures aimed at implementing universal compulsory school education were undertaken on a large scale. The libraries which consolidated and extended the activities of schools also took an active part in this work. Without libraries "three-fourths of the work aimed at eliminating illiteracy would be in vain", said N.K.Krupskaya,

"reading and writing learned with a tremendous effort would not make knowledge accessible to them,nor would it bring them into contact with the store-house of human experience. It would not bear the fruit it was supposed to".[3a]

Of course,such colossal work required considerable material resources.Way back in 1920 when the country was in a state of civil war a special All-Russia extraordinary commission to eliminate illiteracy was set up.It began to compile and publish ABC books for grown-ups and other training appliances in which political issues were explained in a very simple form,and rudiments of scientific knowledge were given. State publishing houses started issuing books,in the first place,primers for illiterate and semi-literate people in 40 languages of the peoples of the USSR.

The problems concerning the publication of literature needed to eliminate illiteracy in Kazakhstan and Central Asia were very sharp.The Turkestan publishing house established in 1920 was to have issued the primer "Reading for Adults" in four languages with due account of the fact that the population was multilingual. The "Rudiments of Knowledge" series was also launched.Inadequate printing facilities compelled the Soviet government to arrange for the booklets of this series to be issued by private publishers in Berlin and then send them to Turkestan.[4]At a time when money was badly needed to restore and develop the national economy such

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3a)Krupskaya N.K. Bibliotechnoye delo(Librarianship),Moscow, 1938,p.19 (In Russian)

4)Mukhamedov A.M.Problems of development of public libraries in the Uzbek SSR.-In:Planning national library systems. Moscow,1977,p.126 (International seminar of UNESCO)(In Russian)

actions characterized vividly the government of the world's first state of the toiling masses which put forward the aim of eliminating backwardness of the formerly oppressed people and securing genuine equality between all the nations and nationalities inhabiting the country.

As is known, the multilingual problem in conditions of a drive to liquidate illiteracy, including secondary ones exists in a number of captialist countries today. This problem is acute in developing countries, but it is being solved there in a somewhat different way than in the USSR. Thus, according to a UNESCO report, Sierra Leone publishes fiction and text-books for primary school only in 5 out of 18 dialects existing in the country. Educationalists of Sierra Leone and some other multilingual developing countries are in favour of using a single common language in a country in order to use the capacities of printing enterprises in the most reasonable way.[5] The USSR developed culture by creating alphabets for the nations that had had no alphabets of their own in order to help them in every way, by publishing literature in their native languages, to grasp the ideas of building a new life.

Working for the liquidation of illiteracy the state faced the problem of training personnel capable of accomplishing this work in the former national outlying districts of tsarist Russia. The complexity of this problem was emphatically stressed in the Decision of the C.P.S.U.(B) Central Committee of 17 May 1929 "On the Work Aimed at Liquidating Illiteracy".

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5)Barker P., Escarpi P. Thirst for Reading. Moscow, 1972, p.71

The Decision obliged the local state bodies "to pay special attention...to the training of those who would eliminate illiteracy from among the local population (in particular from among women)".[6]

In putting into practice most important goals of cultural construction the peculiarities of the national customs and lifestyle of the population of each region had to be permanently taken into account. Thus, in Kazakhstan and Central Asia the work of liquidating illiteracy was based on mobile cultural and educational institutions which were supplied with a small number of books, booklets and journals to serve the nomad population and the inhabitants of the remotest mountainous areas.

In the years of development of librarianship central Russia rendered tremendous, all-round assistance to the young national republics. This is testimony of the mutual aid of nations and their internationalist education which are inherent in a socialist society.

On V.I. Lenin's initiative the R.C.P(B) Central Committee approved on 30 August 1923 the decision of the Central Committee Commission on the National Question about the establishment of the cultural and educational fund attached to the Central Executive Committee of the USSR(TsIK SSSR).

One of the important items of the decision read: "The Central Asia republics as the most backward ones culturally should

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6)Directives of the C.P.S.U.(B) and the Decisions of the Soviet government on public education. Collection of documents covering the 1917-1947 period. Issue 2. MoscowoLeningrad 1947, p. 129

be the first to receive aid from this fund.[7]

Large state subsidies were allocated to develop and strengthen the material resources of libraries. Central Russia helped to consolidate national publishing houses and improve the work of editorial boards of periodicals. Great concern was shown for the training of national personnel in the field of culture who enjoyed great privileges in entering educational establishments.

Great voluntary assistance was rendered. Thus, the literature collected by Moscow scientists (a total of six trainloads of 50,000 books arrived in 1920) made up the bulk of the book stock of Tashkent state university. The library of the Kirghiz branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences received 9,000 books from the reserved stock of the Library of the Academy of Sciences.

To enhance culture in the countryside cities and towns sent 4 million people[8] who took there newspapers, journals and books to enrich the holdings of rural libraries and village reading rooms. Industrial centres and cities of the RSFSR rendered voluntary assistance to libraries and reading rooms of rural areas of all the country's national regions by supplying them with literature for semi-illiterate people. In the late 1920s a particularly large number of books were received by the villages of Kazakhstan, Uzbekstan and Tajikistan.[9]

As a result of enourmous work done by the socialist state to raise the cultural level of the people, in 1926, according to the USSR census, the number of literate people had more than

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7) Orakov E. Main stages in the development of librarianship in Soviet Turkmenistan (1917-1977). Ashkhabad, 1979, p. 10 (In Russian)
8) Pravda of 1 July 1930
9) Kultpokhod, 1930, No. 1, p.6

doubled,as compared with pre-revolutionary times,and by the beginning of World War II it had amounted to 87.4 per cent. It should be pointed out that the rates of the cultural grow of former national outlying areas(in the first place of Central Asian ones) had considerably surpassed those of the central regions.This was an essential condition provided for by the Lenin plan of the cultural revolution in the country.

Due to a tremendous scale of book publishing in different languages of the Soviet peoples the network of libraries and their holdings developed rapidly,which can be exemplified by the following figures:before the Great October Socialist Revolution not a single book was issued in the Kirghiz language, whereas in 1940 as many as 174 books were published;33 books appeared in the Uzbek language in 1913 and 660 in 1940,and 2 and 382 books appeared in the Kazakh language in the respective years.The number of books issued in Russian in the RSFSR increased a mere 1.5 times over these years.

The above figures are graphic testimony of the fact that the peculiarities of tackling issues of cultural development in the USSR are linked with the liquidation of the de facto inequality of nations and nationalities of the multinational state,which necessitated priority concern for the growth of culture of the formerly backward nations.

Right from the beginning the state set the tasks aimed not only at elaborating the main principles of the development of librarianship in the country,but also at putting these principles into practice.The practical goals set included the development of the guidelines of library work in the political

and cultural education of the masses; identification of the content and forms of library work with due account of the national specifics of the development of the republics; establishment of an integrated network of public, scientific and specialized libraries; training of national library personnel; balanced building up of book stocks; development of national bibliography; and the development of management and scientific and methodological guidance of libraries.

All these goals are subordinated to the main one-to secure maximum conformity of the possibilities of libraries to the constantly growing reader needs. Consistent implementation of this goal determined the main trends of the development of librarianship in the USSR. These are linked with the growing role of libraries in all the spheres of life of society: economic, political and cultural.

Naturally, the growing social importance of libraries requires the solution of a number of problems whose content is different at each historical stage.

The major common problems facing all the Soviet libraries today are such comprehensive problems as the growth of the importance of libraries in the communist education of the working people and in the scientific and technological progress, the completion of the shaping of a single system of library service, improvement of the system of the service rendered to different reader categories, and a higher level of training personnel.

The establishment of centralized library systems is a multi-aspect problem directly referring to the content of the work of libraries; it faced the country's library institutions in all its depth and complexity in the 1970s.

At the end of 1980 a total of 3,814 centralized library

systems will have been set up in the country.

In many republics 80-100 per cent of the work involved in tackling this task has been done, but in a number of cases, however, certain difficulties have to be overcome. This work is still particularly complex in the republics of Central Asia, which can be accounted for by objective reasons, in the first place by specific geographical features of Central Asia (mountainous areas, deserts and semi-deserts). For instance, boundless sands make up 80 per cent of the territory of the Turkmen SSR; 90 per cent of the territory of the Tajik SSR are mountains. Hence, communication difficulties aggravated by the fact that many settlements are separated from each other by great, almost insuparable distances of 700-800 klm.

A variety of natural, socio-economic and demographic conditions in the USSR necessitates clear-cut differentiated approach in solving the problem of locating the library network. The theoretical concept concerning this problem is based on the Lenin principle of integrity of the library network. Lenin regarded a library network as a "single, uniform planned organisation" which should include libraries "...of all departments without exception, of central and local institutions".[10] These requirements are fixed in a number of documents, including the "Model Regulations on the Organisation of a Single Network of Public Libraries" (1977), which take into account the conditions prevailing in town and the countryside, population density figures, the dominant number of storeys in the newly built apartment houses, and the distance between libraries.

10) V.I. Lenin and Librarianship. Moscow, 1977, p. 111

A characteristic feature of the plans of locating the library network in the USSR is granting broad initiatives to the ministries of culture of the constituent republics which can introduce changes into the normatives of locating public libraries, stipulated by the general "Model Regulations", with due account of natural, geographical, economic and national features of a given region.

The solution of the centralisation problem in many national republics is also complicated by the multinational nature of the multilingual population, which necessitates the acquisition of the book stock and reader service in 3-4 languages.

An important factor is a high educational level of the country's population and a large share of specialists with a higher and secondary education. According to the 1979 All-Union census of the population the number of specialists with a higher and secondary education per 1,000 people engaged in the national economy of some of the republics is as follows:[11]

RSFSR-- 803
Uzbek SSR-- 848
Kazakh SSR--807
Kirghiz SSR-804
Tajik SSR --770
Turkmen SSR-823

Therefore, a characteristic feature of the functioning of centralized library systems is their coordination and inter-

11) The population of the USSR according to the data of the 1979 All-Union census. Moscow, 1980, p.21-22 (In Russian)

ation with libraries of different type and different departments, which certainly intensifies the use of library holdings and improves the reference-information reader service. Thus, in Uzbekistan agricultural specialists are served by centralized library systems in cooperation with the Central Scientific Agricultural Library of the Uzbek SSR, 23 libraries of research institutions, 9 libraries of experimental stations, 4 libraries of agricultural higher schools and 28 libraries of specialized secondary schools.[12]

Close cooperation in serving scientific workers and specialists of the national economy of Turkmenia has been established between the Central Scientific Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Turkmen SSR, the Republican Scientific Medical Library, the Library of the Advanced Training Institute for Teachers, the Scientific and Technical Library of the Ashkhabad branch of the Central Asian Railway, and others.

The specialists served by libraries is a very important but by far not the most numerous reader category libraries take care of.

Broad masses of workers and peasants who were in fact denied the right to use the wealth of literature before the October Revolution now make up the bulk of readers at public libraries.

In serving specialists engaged in different branches of the national economy and culture libraries of selected regions of the country have much more similar features than differences,

12) Libraries of Uzbekistan. A collection of papers on the theory and practice of librarianship. Issue 5., Tashkent, 1978, p.57 (In Russian)

whereas in rendering service to the mass reader, especially to the one living in the countryside, national and social specifics has to be reckoned with. The latter can be accounted for by a number of reasons, in the first place, by a different degree of the use of libraries by the people of the older age-groups. In the rural areas of Central Asia and Kazakhstan people born before 1941 could not use libraries in their childhood because they were non-existent, therefore they have not got stable reading habits. The task of libraries in these areas is to arouse thirst for reading among the older countryfolk by using illustrated literature printed in large type.

Another reason accounting for the specific features of library service is linked with a variety of languages used. It is essential for librarians to know whether the readers confine themselves to literature in their native language only or can also read books in other languages, first of all in Russian which has become the language of inter-national communication for the peoples of the USSR in the course of history.

Studies conducted by the Lenin State Library of the USSR have shown that the number of bilingual readers is not the same everywhere: in this respect there are differences between republics, between town and the countryside within republics, between mono-national and multinational settlements, as well as between readers of a different educational level. Such differences are also typical of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics. According to the data provided by the All-Union study "The book and reading in the life of Soviet people" people reading in the Kazakh and Russian languages make up 67 per cent in Kazakhstan, 47 per cent in Uzbekistan, and a mere 13 per cent in the multinational villa-

ges of Turkmenia.

This objective factor determines the specific nature of building up and using library holdings and the peculiarities of the guidance of reading. It should be pointed out that the libraries of the regions inhabited by Russians do all in their power to familiarize Russian readers with the wealth of the culture of other Soviet nations and nationalities. They regard this task to be of particular significance. In building up the book stock of libraries special attention is paid to ensure that they acquire literature about the life of other Soviet nationalities and their literary works. Fiction is of special value in promoting rapprochement between different nationalities, their mutual understanding, mutual enrichment of the cultures of Soviet nations, and international education of the working people.

A specific form of library service in conditions of Central Asia is the one rendered to such a reader category as women of the native nationality. In these republics families are generally large, particularly in the countryside. A mother of 7-8 children who is employed in industry or agriculture has less time for reading. The meterials of sociological studies testify that it is in this category that most readers have the time to read only 2-3 books a year. To help this reader category librarians make wide use of mobile-library assistance, talks about books and loud reading of every kind of literature during dinner breaks at production sections.

At present the USSR has no nomad population but in Kazakhstan, Turkmenia and other Central Asian republics, as well as in the North and East of the RSFSR where there are distant pastures people for many months are several hundred kilometres away from

their permanent residence.For instance,Kazakhstan has over 7,000 pastures,located from50 to 700 kilometres away, where over 200,000 people work.Naturally,the forms and methods of library service there differ considerably from those used in the densely populated industrial areas of the country.Under these specific conditions mobile forms of library service are becoming widespread;a helicopter is often the most effective means of delivering literature to the people.

Cultural and library service of shepherds in Kazakhstan is rendered by 1,517 mobile clubs and by more than 3,500 district and rural libraries which provide mobile clubs with up to 500 titles of socio-political,production,instructional, popular science and children's literature.The delivery of the book to each toiler at distant pastures has become the main task of librarians serving the rural population.[13] In doing this work they act jointly with other cultural institutions, film distribution bodies,the "Znaniye" society,as well as bodies of scientific and technical information and public education. Their cooperation is based on comprehensive plans which provide for the holding of thematical evenings,lectures-concerts,classes of adult education centres,and schools of socio-political and economic knowledge.These plans are used to introduce such forms of book propaganda as Specialist's Days,Days of Culture at stock-breeding complexes and mobile displays-previews of literature.All this promotes a change

13)Ways of enhancing the role of libraries in the social and cultural life of the Soviet village and in further development of agricultural production in the light of the decisions of the July(1978) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee.All-Union scientific and practical conference. Moscow,1978,p.27

of the lifestyle of the people working at distant pastures.

The problem of training national library personnel and of raising their qualification is being rapidly solved. During the 9th five-year plan period 93,000 librarians were trained. During the 10th five-year plan period(1976-1980) 103,000 specialists,including over 30,000 with a higher education, will be trained.

The Central Asian republics have set up library departments at state universities or teacher-training institutes which train national library personnel.A specific feature of training personnel in Kazakhstan is organisation of a librar department on the basis of the Kazakh state women's teacher-training institute which has been functioning since 1956 and is training librarians-bibliographers of higher qualificatio and broad specialization for the public,scientific,special, children's and school libraries of the republic.

During its existence the library department of the Kazak women's teacher-training institute has trained about 2,000 specialists.This department is the first educational divisio in the history of the Kazakh SSR training librarians-bibliog raphers of a higher qualification.It has a good physical plant and a sufficient number of scientific and teaching personnel.

It is significant that such training of personnel has been organised in the place where before the Great October Socialist Revolution there was not a single higher school, where a woman could not even hope for the most elementary primary education,let alone higher educatipn.

Today the Soviet woman occupies an honourable place among specialists of different fields. Among higher school teachers alone 37 per cent are women, whereas in the USA they make up a mere 25 per cent.[14]

In conditions of the existing deficit of specialists with higher library education of particular importance is the country's standing system of advanced training of personnel. Its role is also essential for higher school graduates, as present and future requirements necessitate constant expansion and deepening of their professional and general cultural knowledge.

The system of advanced training in the constituent republics includes such components as the republican institut of advanced training of a republic's ministry of culture, regional and district seminars, as well as practical studies and workshops in libraries.

Republican institutes organize advanced training for regional, district, town and rural librarians, as well as for the management of centralized library systems and heads of departments of these libraries.

The republics with regional division systematically conduct seminars for different categories of workers employed at regional libraries. Classes at these seminars are organized and conducted by state libraries of constituent republics.

The establishment of these libraries is a brilliant achievement of Soviet culture. They are leading library ins-

14/ Estimated according to the data cited in the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook. 1977, Mayenne, 1978. p. 340, 364

titutions of the constituent republics,as well as scientific information,bibliographical,research and methodological centres.Today many state libraries of the constituent republics rank with the world's major libraries,and on a number of parameters(e.g.,the number of readers,attendance,the number of items lent,various forms of bibliographic work) by far surpass them.

Thus,the Pushkin State Library of the Kazakh SSR serves over 54,000 readers a year;the number of visits to the library exceeds 700,000 and the number of books lent amounts to 4 million a year.Annually this library issues over 40 items of printed matter with a total run exceeding 60,000 copies.

Being centres for the development of librarianship in the region state libraries of the constituent republics make wide use of advanced methods of book propaganda and of guidance of reading with the aim of raising the ideological,political, cultural and technical level of the working people and the information service of scientists and specialists;they elaborate a system of measures aimed at using library holdings effectively and applying different means of mechanization of library and bibliographic processes,and so on.

It is largely thanks to libraries that reading is widespread not only in town but in the countryside as well. According to the All-Union study "The Book and Reading in the Life of Soviet People" the reading public beginning with seven-year-old children includes a high percentage of people in all regions,including those whose population was almost

completely illiterate in the past. In Central Asian and Kazakh villages 81 per cent of the population are readers.

A great achievement of libraries is bringing the library book within the reach of the overwhelming majority of families. Although in villages it is particularly hard to tackle this task 70 per cent of rural families of the Central Asian republics make use of the library book stock now.

Looking back at the path traversed by the country's libraries in the years of Soviet power one can see how well they perform their social function and follow V.I.Lenin's appeal to " ... regard as the pride and glory of a public library... the extent to which books are distributed among the people".

15) Lenin V.I. Collected works. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1963, Vol. 19, p. 277